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Book	Policy Manual
Section	3000 - Business & Non-Instructional Operations
Title	Food Service Charging Policy
Code	3542.4
Status	First Reading
Adopted	June 14, 2011
Last Revised	November 14, 2017

~~**FOOD SERVICE CHARGING POLICY**~~

~~The Board of Education has an agreement with the Connecticut State Department of Education to participate in the school based Child Nutrition Program. The Board accepts full responsibility for adhering to the federal and state guidelines and regulations pertaining thereto. Program meals are planned to meet the specified nutrient standards for children as specified by the United States Department of Agriculture in accordance with their age or grade group.~~

~~Although not required by law, but due to its participation in the Child Nutrition Program, the Board approves the establishment of a system to permit students to charge a meal in certain situations.~~

~~The Board realizes that funds from the non-profit School Food Service Account, according to federal regulations, cannot be used to cover the cost of charged meals that have not been paid.~~
~~Federal funds are intended to subsidize the meals of children, and these funds may not be used to subsidize meals for teachers, staff or visitors. Therefore, adults are not permitted to charge meals.~~

~~Families are able to pre-pay for meals to help ensure children have consistent access to healthy meals.~~

~~Charging is not encouraged by the Board, but on those occasions that a student does not have lunch money, s/he will be permitted to charge a reimbursable meal or be offered an alternate meal. An alternate meal is any meal that differs from the day's advertised, reimbursable meal. An alternate meal is a cheese sandwich and milk~~

MEAL CHARGING POLICY

The Colchester Board of Education (the "Board") recognizes the importance of providing nutritious food to students in the Colchester Public Schools (the "District").

The Board is a sponsor of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services' Child Nutrition Programs, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP), and the District shall adhere to the federal and state guidelines and regulations pertaining to these school Child Nutrition Programs. In accordance with federal law, the Board will make a public announcement and notify parents and guardians of the eligibility criteria for free and reduced price meals and provide information regarding how a household may make an application for these benefits. Such notice and application will generally be distributed at the beginning of each school year.

Charging Meals

The District uses an automated prepayment system for student meal accounts. Students whose accounts have insufficient funds, and who do not bring a meal or other funds to school to pay for meals, may charge meals to their meal accounts. Students will be informed of their right to purchase a meal, which excludes a la carte items, for any school breakfast, lunch or other meal offered by the District, even if the student's account has insufficient funds.

The Board prohibits publicly identifying or shaming a student for any unpaid meal charges, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Delaying or refusing to serve a meal to such student;
- Designating a specific meal option for the student; or
- Otherwise taking any disciplinary action against the student.

Collection of Unpaid Meal Charges

The District's efforts to recover from households money owed due to the charging of meals must not have a negative impact on the children involved and shall focus primarily on the adults in the household responsible for providing funds for meal purchases. The District shall consider whether *the* benefits of potential collections outweigh the costs that would be incurred to achieve those collections.

For purposes of this policy, "delinquent debt" means unpaid meal charges.

The District will contact the parents/guardians of students who charge meals to their meal accounts in order for the District to collect the delinquent debt. The first such communication will be a written communication, by mail or e-mail, and/or a telephone communication after the first meal has been charged. Subsequent written and verbal communications with parents/guardians concerning delinquent debt will be made by the building administrator or designee, as may be necessary and appropriate. All communications regarding unpaid meal charges shall be made directly and discreetly to parents/guardians. Written communications with parents/guardians regarding collection of a student's unpaid meal charges shall include information on local food pantries and the Connecticut Department of Social Services' supplemental nutrition assistance program, and a link to the District's or Town's website that lists any community services available to Town residents.

In the event a student's unpaid meal charges are equal to or more than the cost of thirty (30) meals, the parents/guardians of such student will be referred to the District's homeless education liaison.

The Board shall comply with applicable federal and state laws and other federal or state requirements concerning the collection of unpaid meal charges including but not limited to requirements relating to delinquent debt and "bad debt," as defined by federal law, and record-keeping relating thereto. The Board may accept gifts, donations or grants from any public or private sources for the purpose of paying off any unpaid charges for school lunches, breakfasts or other such feeding.

Dissemination of Policy

This policy shall be provided in writing to all households at the start of each school year and to households transferring to the District during the school year. This policy shall be provided to all District staff responsible for its enforcement. In addition, school social workers, nurses, the homeless liaison, and other staff members assisting children in need or who may be contacted by families with unpaid meal charges shall be informed of this policy.

The District shall maintain, to the extent required by law, documentation of the methods used to communicate this policy to households and District staff responsible for policy enforcement.

The District shall provide this policy to the Connecticut State Department of Education during Administrative Reviews.

The Superintendent or designee may, if necessary and appropriate, develop administrative regulations in furtherance of this policy.

Legal

Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-215. Lunches, breakfasts and other feeding programs for public school children and employees. Collection of unpaid charges. Acceptance of gifts, donations or grants.

State of Connecticut, Department of Education, School Health, Nutrition and Family Services Operational Memorandum No. 11-22, "Connecticut Statutory Requirements for Unpaid Meal Charges in Public Schools," June 15, 2022.

State of Connecticut, Department of Education, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education Operational Memorandum No. 4-17, "Guidance on Unpaid Meal Charges and Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments," Nov. 2, 2016.

7 C.F.R. Part 210 National School Lunch Program.

7 C.F.R. Part 220 School Breakfast Program.

7 C.F.R. Part 245 Determining Eligibility for Free and Reduced Price Meals and Free Milk in Schools.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Policy Memo SP 46-2016, "Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policy," July 8, 2016.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Policy Memo SP 47-2016, "Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments," July 8, 2016.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Policy Memo SP 23-2017, "Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A," March 23, 2017.